101 the word has so thoroughly taken on a pejorative sense that its
578 use may be a grave insult. What an insult it would be for a Moslem to be called a Bambara, i.e., an infidel, a pagan and an alcoholic!

101 In the strictest sense, however, the word Bambara is applied by the Malinké and, following their lead, by the French only to natives who speak the Bambara dialect and who call themselves Banmana or Bamana. Barring specific exceptions, we shall henceforth use the word in this limited sense in the present work.

X 173 It is evident from the foregoing remarks that the Bambara belong to very ancient indigenous families; indeed, they themselves consider this to be so, and they are so considered by others.

Native informants are likely to say that the Bambara are former slaves of the Malinké; but they also say that the Somono are former slaves of the "Ségou people." Later on (see Chapter 4), we shall see in what sense [10] this slavery should be understood. It was a characteristic result of the political form of the native governments.

101 In addition to the general name given to them or accepted by them, which applies to one or another group, the Bambara are designated by terms expressing their geographic distribution. There are, for instance, those who live at Bélédougou (called Beledugu-ka-u); those in the Kaarta area (Karta-n-ka-u); those at Ségou (Segu-n-ka-u); those around Bani-n-ko (Bani-n-ko-ka-u). Each of these expressions also has a political connotation; Ségu-n-ka-u is often used for members of the ruling party, which holds power at and operates from Ségou, and only the context or the drift of the conversation will make it possible to know what people are actually being discussed.

Among themselves the various Bambara groups often describe one another by nicknames. The "Kaarta people" ironi-
[302] cally call the "Ségou people" Tlu-kene-u, "those with a single braid," because of a peculiar way of doing their hair, or Nya-ni-Nyéle-u, because Nya and Nyélé are popular names for women among the people around Ségou.

101 It is common, too, to call all the members of a clan by a
614 name derived from that of a clan founder or ancestor. Thus, the

*173 to be dug in the courtyard of his house and then summoned the recalcitrant elders, ostensibly for consultation on urgent matters. When they had arrived, Mamari told them that he wished to interview them two by two in order better to know their opinion concerning the questions under consideration. The elders refused. Then, at a sign from Mamari, [40] men who had been posted at hand for the purpose hurled themselves upon the elders, massacred them and threw their corpses into the well, which was then sealed up. It is said that there were 740 elders and also that, since that time, people from Doukounna and Banan-koroni who reach Ségou in the evening never spend the night there.

Now deprived of their rightful leaders, the people of Doukounna and Banan-koroni were henceforth at the mercy of Mamari. He recalled the column from Kirango and, as soon as it had arrived, he summoned the young men of Doukounna and Banan-koroni. Without giving them any explanation, he ordered them to wear their hair in the fashion of the ton-dyon', i.e., to have their hair shaved off except for two locks at the forehead and another at the nape of the neck. The young men protested that they were free men, but Mamari told them: "Your elders are buried here because they persisted in acting like free men, and there are now only women and slaves in your villages." When they were told what had happened in their absence, the young men realized that any resistance was out of the question; so they submitted and went to swell the numbers of the ton-dyon'.

[302 567]

This bold act gave Mamari a permanent army and he was so well aware of the extent of his success that his pride was already openly displayed. "The Dyémé-ka-dougou," he said, "extends from the Mindaka watercourse to that of Sitadougou. On the other bank of the Mindaka, the country belongs to the people of Doua. Let it be well understood that you are either on their side or on mine. We shall no longer eat groundnuts in the ton' together, nor drink our rounds of ton' millet beer. I am the son of Allah and henceforth shall drink only a king's beer in a royal cup. Let those who want to drink with me remain, and all others depart. From now on, the only free men are Nyé Tyétigi of Banan-koroni and Mansa of Banamba. All the rest are my slaves. Therefore, let each village send me 100 men to make up my personal guard."

585 The husband spends the whole day after the wedding night in his hut, where relatives, friends, and neighbors come to congratulate him and present minor gifts of food. He invites them to eat and drink. The wedding is thus prolonged for several days, depending on the husband's wealth, during which time the couple is at the disposal of the guests.

[556] Rich families like to show off the trousseau, jewels, and gifts bestowed on the bride, so during the whole day after the wedding night everything is paraded with great pomp through the village by people of caste who proclaim the items and exaggerate their value. Toward evening the presents are shown one last time to the bride, who sits on a low bench with her face hidden behind a kind of tray, woven with grass, which she holds in her hand. Drums and other instruments make a great uproar, while a female griot, standing behind the bride, sings love songs. Everyone admires the bride's hair, which is artistically braided in a flat crest with two small braids on each side of the face hanging in front and behind the ears. The women finger her jewels as they admire them and her thick-soled sandals.

[533]

[302]

To conclude the ceremony, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi gives cowries to the leader of the singing, and guns are fired for the last time. Then the bride gets up, glides over the ground without lifting her feet, and enters the hut with her companions, while the guests retire. [204]

[481]

Second Marriage

595 The number of wives is limited only by the necessity of providing each one with a suitable living. This means that, theoretically, polygamy is a privilege of the rich. Some men practice it in order to pass as rich men, which flatters their pride, while others use it to gratify a sensual temperament. Most often, however, people in modest circumstances have several wives solely for economic reasons.

When an only wife has young children and no servant to help her, she is extremely overworked. When this is the case,

881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits,

[262]

1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads

881 freshly shaved (4), their bodies rubbed with vegetable butter
[302]

4. Just as their heads were shaved at birth.

(si tlu), [242] arrive in single file. Greeted by the onlookers, they take their places in the front row. Shouts, noisy conversation, and songs are intermingled and make a racket which is interrupted by the arrival of the "girls of the soli" (soli-ma-moso-u). With their hair in a tangle and dressed in short skirts (1)

1. Blue for Moslems and yellowish-brown (basa) for the purely pagan Bambara.

reaching from the navel to the knee, they enter one behind the other, walk around the assemblage, and finally take their places in a group near their mothers and friends.

The assembled men drink around the fires.

881 All the drums are there, and as soon as the girls appear,
533 the drummers rush to their instruments. There are big drums
534 resting on three legs (denu-ba), others which hang from the shoulder, and still others carried under the arm. Young women shake bits of iron (kinge) as one shakes castanets, and there are other iron instruments provided with rings. Old women pound on gourds turned upside down in pots filled with water.

The noise is deafening, and it is dominated by songs in honor of the ancestors shouted by the whole assemblage as loudly as possible. Then the whole crowd, where the tipsy are in the majority and where everyone is at the highest possible pitch of excitement, starts a frenzied dance accompanied by songs usually improvised.

881 While all this is going on, the adepts of the major
789 brotherhood (2) are outside the village, noisily driving out the

2. The Komo around Ségou; the Nama in the Kaarta area.

881 535 In a compact group, the women and girls of all ages and stations shuffle slowly around the orchestra, while the men drink and sing around small fires of dry millet stalks.

From time to time, upon being invited to do so, one of the girls, soli-ma-moso, gets up, rattles her gourd, and joins the dance with slow, deliberate steps.

At dawn, when they are about to return to their huts, the girls, soli-ma-moso, make one last circuit, and then each one, with her heels together and her hands crossed above her head, makes three leaps into the air. She does this three times.

881 201 The Bambara themselves interpret these various details concerning girls, the soli-ma-moso, as symbolic. The girl's position between her mother's legs recalls physical birth. The white cloth represents the one that at her mother's marriage bore witness to virginity and reminds the girl that she will have to give similar proof to her husband. The dance done with slow, measured steps is the symbol of a child learning to walk, and the nine leaps that close the ceremony attest to the fact that the girl is now an adult. A final rite shows the parallelism between the soli and [246] birth: on the sixth day, the nyana-n-son-na-ba shaves the head of the soli-ma-moso (1).

[302]

1. In place of the braided coiffure, young girls wear the magic cord with nine knots, called tafo, on the crown of the head, and this is connected to a similar one, called dyo, at the nape of the neck.

881 End of the soli. On the seventh day, before noon, all the soli-ma-moso go to the well or to the river to wash the soiled clothes and to scour the pots and gourds used for the festival. Then all return to the discipline of the soli: the boys under their tree, and the girls in their huts. The sema watch over the youngsters, who by now are bored with the discipline. About three weeks must pass after the operation before all the soli-ma completely recover.

881 301 and friends have kindly lent for the occasion, they advance shyly. In some areas, notably in the Banī region, they wear bundles of cowries, from the bride price already paid for them, around the hips and hanging on each side of the head (1).

[302 171]

1. Bambara girls who have gone through the soli have their heads shaved. Among other peoples, on the contrary, girls have their hair braided like women for the first time, but to the braid is added a tuft of the hair shaved off seven days after birth; this hair has usually been lost, but a small tuft is made to simulate it.

881 [535] Boys and girls, following the old women who lead them, dance around the orchestra, and then all sit down in a circle. The nyana-n-son-na-ba takes the floor. He speaks in a low voice, and, as is proper, his words are repeated in a loud voice by a herald. He proclaims the end of the soli, recalls its principal events, and indicates clearly which children have participated in the rite; each boy and girl is specifically named. He will also be sure to point out that the soli is an immemorial custom among the Bambara and that there is no worse insult than to [578] treat a Bambara as uncircumcised. He closes by inviting everyone to eat, drink, and celebrate in the joy and harmony appropriate to such a festival.

[535] Dancing is resumed, and the boys and girls of the soli take part. The festivities continue as long as the refreshments last, usually several days.

To end it all, no one leaves without giving at least a few kola nuts to the heroes of the festival, the boys and girls.

The last phase is the thanks given by the soli-ma to those who assisted at the da-woro. In noisy bands, boys and girls dash about the village in two distinct groups. The girls' group is headed by the soma-moso who is called masa (queen), followed by the masa-ma-kono (vice-queen) and the masa-ma-kono-segere [248] (follower of the vice-queen); the last girl in the

614 religious and reciprocal oath. Their contribution entitled them
701 to a share of the booty. Volunteers, who enlisted for an engagement or a whole campaign, came in under conditions settled in advance.

The fama furnished the allies, just as he did the volunteers, with whatever they needed and deducted the amount from their share of the loot. Sometimes a third party, not involved in the expedition, provided mounts, equipment, and weapons for the enterprise in exchange for a prearranged reward.

In short, armed pillage was a business directed by the fama, who could admit interested participants if he so desired. If the operation were successful, the clan gained predominance over
[727] the conquered regions, which the fama then exploited as he saw fit. The booty was the first result of the enterprise, and it served both to pay the expenses incurred in the affair and to swell the treasury of the clan.

This explains why the clan's army, for a consideration, hired itself out to anyone who asked for support, as an ally, as a mercenary force, or in any other capacity. The army might simply intervene in a quarrel of its own accord when there seemed to be profit to be gained (1). [313]

1. See below how the fama of Ségou lent his support to a marabout of Sous. The Bambara also intervened on numerous occasions in the internal quarrels of Khasso, Boundou, Fouta, etc. Their role as mercenaries is clearly shown in the Tarikh es Soudan.

614
701 The ton'-dyon' were distinguished by a special hair ar-
569 rangement. Their heads were completely shaved except for three
[302] tufts of hair which formed two braids on the crown of the head and one at the nape of the neck.

The slaves of the household of the fama could be recognized by their well-known tattoo (1) which consisted of three

[304]

1. In general, it is risky to depend

Men	Women	Children	All
462 463	**Circumcision and excision**		
Male smiths for the boys	Females of smiths' caste for the girls		
	Midwifery		
	All women past menopause		
	Religion		
Koma and Dio reserved to men	?		
	Coiffure		
[302] Men's heads are shaved by men	Women braid the men's hair where this mode of hairdressing survives		
	All the women's coiffures		
	Ropes		
Preparation of fiber, drying, cording			
	Tanning		
Male shoemakers			
[67]	**Rubber**		
[857] Sale		Gathering and preparation	

291 [177] designs. European influence has naturally made itself felt in the fashions, and European thread is replacing native cotton thread, but the color symbolism in the bands is retained. Even though European fabrics invade the markets more and more, the traditional clothes remain the most sought after, although they have undergone certain modifications inspired by European fashions even while remaining very original.

291 531 585 Although the Bambara go barefoot, in certain circumstances they make ornamented clogs to give to the new bride. These sandals are decorated with geometric designs, engraved with a hot iron by the blacksmith, that symbolize the twinship, the multiplication of children, the parents, the husband's family, the couple's language, and the sealing of the association. These signs are encircled by the sign of the union of the whole. Also, the whole ritual of taking possession lasts for several days.

302 Coiffure. At the present time, the adult males no longer wear the traditional coiffure consisting of two plaits at the side, but the children still have their hair shaved and braided according to custom. Thus, the uncircumcised boys wear a crest of hair going from the forehead to the nape of the neck, while the rest of the head is shaved. The crest symbolizes the [99] divine serpent. The children of blacksmiths also wear, at the sides of the head, two circles of hair which are cut by lines representing the forge. When a child is born after the death of several brothers and sisters, only half of his head is shaved in mockery, so that the dya subject to this pretended neglect will decide to stay in the child. The children of Marabouts have their hair shaved in such a manner that it forms a spiral which starts in the middle of the skull and covers the whole head. Afterwards, bands of hair are shaved in a manner to trace a cross on this spiral. The little girls wear a small braid across the forehead, falling on the left side, while married women wear a braid at each side of the head. These braids are made by adding fibers of the da, shining with karite, plaited with the hair. Finally, the women wear 301 22 gold rings at the ears, images of the 22 primordial elements, or sometimes a single large ring in the form of a crescent closed by threads of red cotton, which is a résumé of the 22 others. These rings keep impure words from the ear, which plays an important [176] role in generation; it is through the ornamentation that the spirits hear what is said to man.

181 "2. The Bambara makes a solid and disciplined infantryman ...
142 Mentally he is rather dull and stupid, physically he is stocky and solid." Previously, the Abbé Henry had concluded in these terms: "The Bambara is a farmer ... Well proportioned, his height is medium, neither tall nor short. His chest is strong, and his short, thickset neck supports a large head covered with black, wooly hair. Nothing in his visage betokens spiritual force, energy, intelligence. His forehead is receding, his eyebrow arches are rather pronounced, and his jet-black eyes, of which the white part is slightly cream (!), are straight. His jaws, nearly always well toothed, project slightly; he has strong, thick lips, a short chin, cheekbones ... a little projecting, and his flat nose is horribly open and squashed at its root.

145 "The wife, as well as the husband, is strong, robust. More often than not she is knock-kneed, and this constitutional defect doubtless comes from the fact that she is obliged, from her earliest childhood, to carry rather heavy burdens on her head, burdens often too heavy for her strength [sic]. Mentally, the Bambara has a mind 181 as thick as his body. Slow to understand and lacking curiosity, he has no desire to improve his condition. 'What my fathers did, I must do' -- that is his great principle ... Lazy, good-for-nothing even, he believes he's done everything if he has enough in his granary to feed himself and his family ... Timorous, he fears the European exactly as a slave fears his master, and if he serves the European passably well, the latter is greatly mistaken if he thinks he has gained the native's affection. He detests the White, as he detests the Moslem; the White is the conqueror, an anti-fetishist, and therefore an enemy."

Finally, M. Monteil, in his Monographie de Djenné [Djenné
142 Monograph], tells us in his turn: "... elongated skull and pronounced
302 prognathism; the black, wooly hair is often gathered in braids by the young people ... the top of the head is often shaven, which makes the forehead look larger. The women affect a sort of transversal crest.

142 "The forehead recedes, the eyebrow arches project ... the nose [110] flattened, the root of the nose squashed, the nostrils gaping wide, the lips thick ... the teeth wide with little space between ..., the neck large, the shoulders wide and straight, the chest strong and long, the members robust, the joints thick. Rather often for the woman, sometimes for the man, a fairly pronounced steatopygia.

852 Alla m'i balola, kouyo kouyo, you are called (. . .), may God make
533 you live!" Two women take up the corners of the rectangular cloth which will hold the child cradled on its mother's back, and the little one is rolled three times on an ax head if it is a boy or on the iron stick used to clean cotton if it is a girl, as if to say: "Be strong and vigorous, be a help and a support to your family!"

The child is placed astride on the back of a young girl and knotted into the rectangular piece of cloth, its mother's tafé, or loincloth. An old woman sticks a pinch of chewed kola nut on its forehead, on each side of its cranium above the ears, and on top of its head, and she knots a white cloth band a finger wide around its forehead. The girl receives a handful of millet, goes to the public square to pound it, and, with the child still on her back, prepares dégé (millet flour mixed with water). When she has prepared the gruel, she goes and offers it to the mother, who puts a pinch of it into the little one's moth, and the ceremony is finished. Not entirely, however, for a few old women run around the village with a gourd of dégé in their hands. They look for sterile women, who shut themselves in their huts and hide. Some are always caught, and they are covered with dégé; the more they cry out and the more they struggle, the more they get whitewashed.

846 After her child is shaved, a Bambara woman goes about the
852 village and attends to her work. But she does not braid her hair for
302 three months if she has given birth to a boy and for four months if she has had a girl (1), /172/ nor does she go to neighboring villages.

1. Women who braid their hair
are not of pure stock.

When this period is over, she braids her hair, covers herself with beads, with bits of amber and bracelets, dresses in her best, makes herself beautiful, and goes to present her baby, all running with butter, to the headman and elders. Her husband grants her several days' leave
[514] (1), and she immediately goes to her family.

1. About 8 to 15 days.

festival lasts as long as there is d'lo. After a few hours of sleep, before the noon meal, the excised girls come back, and around the well there is an endless babel punctuated by joyous laughter as they wash their loincloths, the cloths soiled by the dust of the night, and as they mend gourds, the dishes of this country. The pure Bambara girls, those who are not of the blacksmith caste nor of the "Marka" people of more or less mixed stock, have lost their grace and beauty and seem quite comical with their shaved heads. Just as at six to eight days after birth the head of the village, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri fetish, made motions over their heads and cut their hair, since the "hair of the womb" is not allowed to be seen in public, so at the da woro, six days after circumcision, they lose it again, since they cannot enter life with the hair of childhood; a dirty handkerchief replaces the locks of which they were so proud, they are without bead or jewel, and on their foreheads, in place of the multicolored crown, is the string with nine knots called the tafo, and it is fastened in back at the nape of the neck to the string called the djo, which is intended to protect them from sore throat, mumps, headache, and just about all illnesses.

4. The Festival of the Boloko Déou Don Bo, The Coming Out of the Circumcised and the Excised, The Real Entry into Civil and Religious Life

After the da woro, the festival of the sixth day, the circumcised boys go back under the sacred tree outside the village, and the excised girls return to their huts. They take up again their life of "sweet idleness," and their little excursions in a group, at specified hours, to satisfy the wants of nature. They also have their days of big excursions. When the markets take place, they go to cut thorns at some 100 meters from the village. They bar the paths, set up /193/ a barricade, and ask every passer-by for a doua-mo, a share of the market. From habit, and especially from fear of the cuffings that are readily given out and of the spirits that watch over and protect the young people, everybody obeys and pays the toll. In addition to fish tails they also take in enough cowrie shells to buy a bit of meat and make themselves a treat.

881 [887] Moment by moment the old women come closer and the word "Kouyo ê, Kouyo ê" resounds louder and louder. But now they come out, and their bodies move as if they were made of rings, so closely do they imitate a worm surprised by a ray of sunshine who is hastily returning to its nest in the ground. With their pointed chins, wrinkled skins, and toothless jaws, they look like real savages as they furiously scrape two iron rods; on their bald heads they wear dirty towels, the filthy appurtenances of sorceresses, wound without skill or taste. With spear in hand the young citizens appear in full trousers; they wear caps with double points or loud-colored turbans with long fringes, and their bodies disappear under loose blouses still all perfumed with the musty smell of the bottom of a storage bin, all stiff and shiny under a paste of starch. They leap and shout, they brandish their arms, assume the look of warriors, and especially assume such a look of conceit that one's laughter is unloosed.

[445] After the boys come the girls, fanning their "alms purses" all decorated with cowrie shells; these are platters braided of fine, pliable grass, doubtless those onto which the bloody remnants were placed on the morning of the soli si, or arms' vigil. They come forward stiffly, [301] and glide rather than walk over the ground, for their feet are weighed down by small chains and iron rings, and can hardly be lifted. Gold or copper crescents pull down the septum of their noses, a handful of striped periwinkle shells hangs from the lobe of each ear, several coral necklaces encircle their heads, and everywhere, chiefly around their necks, are pieces of amber interspersed by grigris and beads of every size and shade. Bambara of the noumou, or blacksmith caste, the Marka turned Bambara, and every Bambara girl /196/ of more or less mixed stock whose head was not shaved at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day, has their hair braided, and on top of the crest which ends in two small braids along each ear, there is an odd little bundle, a handful of hair. This is in memory of the eighth day after the girl's birth, the day when she was given her name, and what she is wearing is nothing less than what the Bambara call "the hair of the womb" (1). If this has been lost, as is usually the case, the

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1. Newborn infants have their heads shaved six to eight days after birth; they cannot go out of their homes before being shorn of the hair of the womb (ou ba, "their mothers"; kono, "womb"; si, hair).

881
292 mother provides some of hers. The dress-up outfit of our excised girls is a regular harness; two or three loincloths in layers encircle their waists, and of the actual costume, the band of cloth which shakes behind in limp and loose trains, the big pompom is all that shows. At least one can look at them and see them, as for once pretty white blouses clothe them; the long cloth slings required in the dances are thrown over their shoulders and brought to the front and create quite a pretty effect. In Bani country the girls wear a wide belt of cowrie shells around the hips and over the loincloths, and on each side two bundles of cowrie shells hang from leather thongs that pass over the shoulders and are crossed on the chest. This dousou ko (2), as it is

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2. Dousou, "soul," "heart," "seat of love"; ko, "affair," "pledge of love."

called, is the remaining portion of the bride price given by the fiancé, and is worth 5,000 to 6,000 cowrie shells.

881 Around the drums that rage in the square, behind the old women who scrape their pieces of scrap iron, and behind the female story-tellers /griottes/ who sing of their charms, their strength and their beauty, the circumcised boys and excised girls circle for a few moments and go and sit on the mats that have been prepared for them.

Kola nuts are distributed to the new citizens; gourds of dége, millet flour mixed with honey water and milk, are placed at the feet of the girls, queens of the day, and the head of the village makes the speech that is required at the beginning of every festival. His herald, standing beside him, repeats it word by word, sentence by

5. Exhibition of the Bride's Trousseau on the Evening of the First Day

585

Although the sun is high above the horizon, it is already without strength and life, and at the door of the entry hut to the couple's dwelling, drums and trumpetings rage and give honor to the young woman who is seated in the midst of them on a tiny stool. She allows people to admire her adornment, her beads and her jewels, her rings of copper and tin and sometimes also of gold and silver; she allows them to rave about the shoes with soles three fingers thick, which are a gift of the groom, and about her artistic, finely braided coiffure, [302] a mountain of hair forming a crest across her head which ends in two thin locks in front of and behind each ear -- cavalryman's helmet with a broken chin strap, one might say, all ebony and thrown on its side. But she has given her heart and her promise, and she covers her face with the platter of braided grass that she holds in her right hand.

[534] The horns of antelopes, cows, and bulls, which are the Bambara trumpets, cease to roar, the drums stop booming, and a group of women (usually storytellers /griottes/, for they sniff out festivals and orgies with the scent of a vulture who smells carrion for 20 leagues) place themselves behind her and sing songs of love.

Preceded by a band of singers and a group of drums (2), the

[556]

2. This parade of the trousseau across the village only occurs at rich weddings when the trousseau is really worth the trouble. Most frequently only one exhibition takes place, the one in the evening.

file djiralaou (the women who show the gourds) have run through the village all morning, going from hut to hut to display the trousseau. That is not enough; under the eyes of the bride it is displayed again, exhibited one last time, and without fail the connoisseurs /213/ assess it and, without any embarrassment whatsoever, set an accurate value on it (1).